

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR (Georgian SSR)

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SUBJECT Nitrogen Plant and Airfield at Rustavi and
Tank Park at Tbilisi (Tiflis)

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1. Armored tank dispersal area south of Tiflis (Tbilisi): The hospital, formerly a boarding school, is situated on the west side of the road extending south from Tiflis (41° 42' N, 44° 45' E). The tank dispersal area is adjacent to the hospital and about two kilometers from the outskirts of Tiflis. On trips to and from Tiflis, source noticed many new, rather large buildings which because of their proximity to the tank dispersal area can be assumed to be a part of the military installation. There are about 400-500 tanks in the area, constantly in use on practice runs to a spot beyond the hospital on the road extending south from Tiflis. The tanks are described as the T-34 type with five bogie wheels, no track supporting rollers and a center turret with two hatches. The gun barrel is comparatively long, extending beyond the front of the tank, and equipped with a special type muzzle brake.
2. Airfield and air activity in Rustavi (42° 17' N, 43° 51' E): The Rustavi airfield is adjacent to the railroad extending from Batumi to Baku via Tiflis. The city and industrial areas are on one side of the Kura river between the railroad and the river, and the airfield and a few tank maneuvering areas are on the other side of the railroad and away from the city. Until December 1949 no hangars or large repair sheds could be seen on the field, and only a few old biplanes were in evidence. The usual direction of planes landing and taking off from the field was Tiflis, only a few kilometers away. Once in early July 1949 target practice with a towed sleeve target took place, but the tow plane came from another airfield. In summer 1949 and to a greater extent in December 1949 modern planes flew almost daily over Rustavi. They are described as jet planes. They came from Tiflis, circled over Rustavi at an altitude of a few hundred meters, and left in the direction of Tiflis. These planes never landed on the Rustavi airfield.
3. Concentrated parachute jumping (every day for several weeks)

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takes place irregularly. At such times two planes are constantly in the air from sunrise to sunset. The jumping practice is conducted for civilians, not for military personnel. Jumps are made from two seater biplanes, and the time of descent is about three minutes. The parachute and a small auxiliary chute open immediately after the jump, with the auxiliary chute remaining a little to one side. Civilians, women as well as men, receive a diploma and a medal after 5-7 jumps. According to fellow prisoners who had been in Rustavi longer, parachute training was conducted in 1948 also.

4. Rustavi armored tank unit training area: West of the airfield and adjacent to it is an armored tank training area. The unit complement of about 300-400 men is lodged in two small tent encampments. From a distance the tanks resemble T-34's or an improved model of that type. Tank training took place from August 1949 to October 1949.

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5. Rustavi nitrogen factory: The nitrogen factory, now under construction, is east of and adjacent to the airfield. The area borders directly on the railroad and is opposite or above the Arkhi railroad station. In July 1949 the first German PW's were assigned to start building and in autumn 1949 many FSO (sic) (FZU?) students arrived to help with construction. These young students, identified by blue organizational uniforms, are politically trained and are sent to receive practical training. They are extremely poor workers. Upon completion of the practical training period these students reportedly have the right to pick their profession. By December 1949 only one large building had been completed, and production had not been started.

Encl:

1 sketch map of Tiflis armored tank dispersal area

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